

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace the *title* at page 1, line 2 and 3 with the following revised title:

BRANCHING PIPE COUPLING JOINT AND AN AIR CONDITIONER  
~~PROVIDED WITH THE SAME~~ THEREWITH

Please add the following *new* paragraph on page 1, between lines 2 and 3:

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This U.S. National stage application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(a) to Japanese Patent Application No. 2004-153056, filed in Japan on May 24, 2004, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference.

Please replace the heading at page 4, line 7, with the following rewritten version:

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION ~~DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION~~

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 32 with the following rewritten version:

A branching pipe joint according to the first aspect of the present invention is a branching pipe joint for distributing a refrigerant flowing within a main pipe to two flows, comprising a substantially Y-pipe shaped branch part, a first branch nozzle part, a second branch nozzle part, and a first branch pipe. The branch part comprises an inlet pipe part wherethrough flows the refrigerant that flows in from the main pipe, and a first outlet pipe part and a second outlet pipe part wherethrough flows the refrigerant along a first direction, which is the flow direction of the refrigerant that flows through the inlet pipe part, and along the first direction in directions substantially symmetric to a centerline of the inlet pipe part. The first branch nozzle part is connected to the first outlet pipe part and extends along the

first direction. The second branch nozzle part is connected to the second outlet pipe part and extends along the first direction. The first branch pipe is a pipe member, wherein one end part is connected to a tip part of the first branch nozzle during plumbing work, and is bent so that the other end part faces a direction that intersects the first direction in a state connected to the first branch nozzle part. The first branch nozzle part and the second branch nozzle part are disposed so that the spacing between the portion of the tip part of the first branch nozzle part nearest the second branch nozzle part side and the portion of the second branch nozzle part nearest the tip part of the first branch nozzle part is less than or equal to 40 mm.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 6 with the following rewritten version:

A branching pipe joint according to the second aspect of the present invention is a branching pipe joint according to the first aspect of the present invention, wherein the first branch pipe is capable of connecting to the first branch nozzle part by brazing. The spacing between the portion of the tip part of the first branch nozzle part nearest the second branch nozzle part side and the portion of the second branch nozzle part nearest to the tip part of the first branch nozzle part is greater than or equal to 7 mm.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 17 with the following rewritten version:

A branching pipe joint according to the third aspect of the present invention is a branching pipe joint according to the first or second aspect of the present invention ~~inventions~~, wherein the other end part of the first branch pipe comprises a first reducer pipe connecting part, wherein the pipe diameter changes in steps.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 23 with the following rewritten version:

A branching pipe joint according to the fourth aspect of the present invention is a branching pipe joint according to any one ~~invention~~ of the first through third aspects of the present invention ~~inventions~~, wherein the tip part of the second branch nozzle part comprises a second reducer pipe connecting part that protrudes further than the tip part of the first branch nozzle part toward the first direction side and wherein the pipe diameter changes in steps.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 33 with the following rewritten version:

A branching pipe joint according to the fifth aspect of the present invention is a branching pipe joint according to any one invention of the first through third aspects of the present invention ~~inventions~~, further comprising a second branch pipe. The second branch pipe is a pipe member wherein one end part is connected during plumbing work to the second branch nozzle part, comprising a second reducer pipe connecting part at the other end part wherein the pipe diameter changes in steps, and extending along the first direction in a state connected to the second branch nozzle part.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 8 with the following rewritten version:

An air conditioner according to the sixth aspect of the present invention comprises: at least one indoor unit; a plurality of outdoor units; a union connecting piping that serves as a main pipe extending from the indoor unit to the plurality of outdoor units; at least one branching pipe joint, according to any one ~~invention~~ of the first through fifth aspects of the present invention ~~inventions~~, that is connected to the union connecting piping in accordance with a number of the outdoor units and that distributes the flow of a refrigerant to two flows; and a plurality of unit branch pipings that each connects the branching pipe joint to a connection port of one of the outdoor units.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 25 with the following rewritten version:

With the first aspect of the present invention, the structure is such that the first branch pipe, which is bent so that it faces a direction that intersects the first direction, can be connected to the tip part of the first branch nozzle part, and it is possible to achieve both a compaction of the vicinity of the branch part and the prevention of drift therein because the spacing between the first branch nozzle part and the second branch nozzle part is reduced.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 30 with the following rewritten version:

With the second aspect of the present invention, it is possible to easily connect the first branch pipe to the connecting part of the first branch nozzle part by brazing during plumbing work because the spacing between the portion of the tip part of the first branch nozzle part nearest the second branch nozzle part side and the portion of the second branch nozzle part nearest the tip part of the first branch nozzle part is greater than or equal to 7 mm.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 1 with the following rewritten version:

With the third aspect of the present invention, it is possible to connect a refrigerant piping having a different diameter because the first reducer pipe connecting part is formed in the first branch pipe.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 4 with the following rewritten version:

With the fourth aspect of the present invention, it is possible to secure a space for performing the work of cutting the second reducer pipe connecting part using a pipe cutter because the second reducer pipe connecting part, which is formed at the tip part of the second

branch nozzle part, protrudes further than the tip part of the first branch nozzle part toward the first direction side.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 9 with the following rewritten version:

With the fifth aspect of the present invention, it is possible to reduce the size of the branch part in the first direction because it is structured so that the second branch pipe, which extends along the first direction, can connect to the tip part of the second branch nozzle part.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 12 with the following rewritten version:

With the sixth aspect of the present invention, it is possible to reduce the troublesome time when performing the racking process after affixing the heat insulating material to the connecting piping.

Please remove the following heading and paragraphs beginning at page 9, line 30:

~~EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS~~

- ~~1 — Air conditioner~~
- ~~2 — Outdoor unit~~
- ~~3 — Indoor unit~~
- ~~21, 22 — Connection ports~~
- ~~51, 53 — Union connecting piping, branch connecting piping, (main pipes)~~
- ~~54 — Unit branch piping~~
- ~~181 — Branching pipe joint~~
- ~~182 — Branch part~~
- ~~182a — Inlet pipe part~~
- ~~182b — First outlet pipe part~~
- ~~182c — Second outlet pipe part~~

Serial No.: New – PCT/ JP2005/009451 Nat'l Phase '  
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~~183 — First branch nozzle part~~  
~~184 — Second branch nozzle part~~  
~~184a — Second reducer pipe connecting part~~  
~~186 — First branch pipe~~  
~~186a — First reducer pipe connecting part~~  
~~187 — Second branch pipe~~  
~~187a — Second reducer pipe connecting part~~  
~~S — Spacing~~

Please replace the heading at page 10, line 16, with the following rewritten version:

~~BEST MODES FOR CARRYING OUT~~ DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE  
INVENTION

Please add the following new heading at page 16, line 2:

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS: